

## **Clarifying the Chief Scientist's position on reducing carbon emissions**

In response to an article published across multiple news sources 2–4 December 2018, Dr Finkel wrote a letter to the editors to clarify his position on reducing Australia's carbon emissions. His response, which was published by several of the newspapers, is available below.

Dear Editor,

On Monday 3 December you published an opinion piece by Andrew Bolt titled, 'Less marching, more learning'\*; which included a reference to me 'admitting' that we "could stop all Australia's emissions – junk every car, shut every power station, put a cork in every cow – and the effect on the climate would still be 'virtually nothing'".

Those are Andrew Bolt's words, not mine, and they are a complete misrepresentation of my position. They suggest that we should do nothing to reduce our carbon emissions, a stance I reject, and I wish to correct the record.

On 1 June 2017 I attended a Senate Estimates hearing where Senator Ian Macdonald asked if the world was to reduce its carbon emissions by 1.3 per cent, which is approximately Australia's rate of emissions, what impact would that make on the changing climate of the world. My response was that the impact would be virtually nothing but I immediately continued by explaining that doing nothing is not a position that we can responsibly take because emissions reductions is a little bit like voting, in that if everyone took the attitude that their vote does not count and no-one voted, we would not have a democracy.

Similarly, if all countries that have comparable carbon emissions took the position that they shouldn't take action because their contribution to this global problem is insignificant, then nobody would act and the problem would continue to grow in scale.

Let me be clear, we need to continue on the path of reducing Australia's carbon emissions. The fact remains that Australia's emissions per person are some of the highest in the world.

In response to the recent IPCC report, I urged all decision makers – in government, industry, and the community – to listen to the science and focus on the goal of reducing emissions, while maximising economic growth. I was upfront about the magnitude of the task: it is huge and will require a truly global effort.

We've never been a nation to shy away from a challenge, or from shouldering our fair share of the responsibility for solving global issues. Sitting on our hands while expecting the rest of the world to do their part is simply not acceptable.

Dr Alan Finkel AO

NOTE: The above was published as the lead letter in the Herald Sun on December 8, 2018